



**STRATEGIC VISION STATEMENT
FOR SHERBROOKE'S
CULTURAL, ECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL
AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Sherbrooke, a university city that is both people-centred and environmentally friendly, with a dynamic economy that has made it a benchmark among regional capitals.

A university city open to the world, Sherbrooke is focusing its development on a dynamic knowledge-based economy; a diversified, high value-added industrial base; and a desire to develop our city into a choice urban tourist destination.

A people-centred city featuring a unique living environment and quality services, Sherbrooke is determined to optimize the occupancy of its urban space and highlight its rural and agricultural sectors.

Striving to attain green city status, and within the context of climate change, Sherbrooke determinedly makes conscious choices reflecting its concern for sustainable development, incorporating environmental protection and the enhancement of natural environments.

A benchmark among regional capitals, Sherbrooke is building on its strategic positioning as an attractive and innovative economic pole.

TO ACHIEVE THIS REQUIRES:

STRATEGIES

- Provide quality living environments
- Protect the environment and natural environments
- Foster active transportation and public transit
- Optimize occupancy in Sherbrooke's urbanized sector
- Enhance the value attributed to rural and agricultural areas
- Consolidate the economic base and develop the knowledge-based economy
- Position Sherbrooke as a destination for urban tourism

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- Encourage citizen participation and community life

PROVIDE QUALITY LIVING ENVIRONMENTS

Sherbrooke is known for the quality of life that its residents enjoy, an element contributing to their personal growth. This quality of life is also an asset to attract new businesses and expand the number of households, a particularly valuable asset in a context of declining demographic growth.

The community services and facilities Sherbrooke provides are generally regarded as sufficient for the population's size and expectations. Our city's advantages in terms of quality of life must be maintained and can be enhanced on some fronts. Avenues for development primarily focus on housing and the quality of the living environment.

ORIENTATIONS

- Provide quality housing in all categories and all types of dwellings, particularly in the area of social and affordable housing.
- Pay particular attention to quality in the development of public spaces (streets, public squares, parks, parking lots, city entrances, etc.) and ensure their continued existence.
- Ensure the protection and enhancement of the built environment in older urban districts.
- Complete the park network and improve park planning and design to consolidate facilities.
- Ensure the quality of the design of residential, commercial and industrial development projects.
- Improve the quality of residential areas with neglected buildings.
- Improve service provision in each neighbourhood, favouring diversity and a mix of local services.
- Ensure the safety of individuals and goods, and ensure that public safety services are close to the population.

PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS

The quality of the environment is a determining factor in quality of life. From this perspective, natural environments play a vital role. They must be preserved if we want to maintain wildlife and plant habitats and to protect biodiversity from threats posed by human activity. These milieus also play a role in the city, providing the public with natural landscapes and the backdrop for various activities involving contact with nature.

The major challenge related to the environment is climate change. On one hand, the production of greenhouse gases must be limited; on the other, Sherbrooke must adapt to inevitable climate changes. These climate changes are likely to have an impact on living environments and biodiversity.

Our city has already taken action to address these challenges, in particular, through:

- the protection of lakeshores, riverbanks, littoral zones and floodplains;
- sustainable development (storm water management, the environmental management of road salts, waste management);
- the mapping of wetlands;
- the identification of potential ecological sites;
- watershed management.

Sherbrooke ensures that environmental policies are incorporated into its planning documents and applied.

ORIENTATIONS

PRESERVATION OF NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS AND BIODIVERSITY:

- Continue acquiring knowledge about our natural environments.
- Inform and educate citizens on protecting the environment and natural environments.

- Seek to preserve a surface area (equivalent to 12% of Sherbooke's territory) of suitable natural environments to be protected and conserved in such a way as to:
 - protect wetlands based on their environmental value;
 - preserve wildlife corridors;
 - ensure the protection of the habitats of plant and wildlife species that have been given protection status;
 - preserve exceptional forest ecosystems.
- Protect and restore the shores and littoral zones of lakes and streams.
- Regulate tree cutting within the urban area boundary by encouraging the conservation of existing trees.
- Ensure work is ecologically managed, and in particular, control sediments when carrying out construction projects.
- Harmonize logging rules in cooperation with stakeholders from the milieu.
- Incorporate development projects into their natural environment and identify suitable protection, conservation and compensation actions.

ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

- Incorporate climate risk management into our city's decision-making processes.
- Adopt an action plan for adapting to climate change that specifies the following:
 - new planning approaches for heat islands (planting trees, revegetation, white or green roofs, etc.);
 - possible modifications to be made to flood zone provisions;
 - changes required to urban infrastructure and facilities.

FOSTER ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC TRANSIT

Greenhouse gas reduction is a worldwide issue. The Quebec government has made a commitment that by 2020, it will reduce pollution emissions by 20% below 1990 levels. The transportation sector is the primary target, since it accounts for 40.7% of emissions, 32.5% of which come from road transport. Greater reliance on active transportation and public transit will reduce automobile use. It will also limit the impact of noise, road infrastructure costs, and the use of space. It will also have a positive impact on health.

To achieve greater balance between the use of automobiles and other means of transportation, action must be taken in terms of transportation offered, as well as to the city's settlement patterns.

A number of constraints have an impact on active transportation methods within the territory: urban-related breaks (highways and main arteries), nature-based cut-offs (waterways, topography), and heavy traffic. Designs are not conducive to sharing the road and do not facilitate safe walking or bicycling.

Nonetheless, the road network adequately meets the demand; there are only a few zones where traffic slows down at certain times of the day. In terms of public transit, buses circulate at full capacity during peak periods in the central sector, but the service is reduced outside of peak hours and in the outskirts. The addition of incentives would reduce trip length and make public transit more appealing.

In addition, interurban public transit serves the Estrie region as well as several Quebec cities, in particular Montreal, Quebec City and Trois-Rivières.

In terms of layout, Sherbrooke covers a large, not very densely populated area. Development is discontinuous and uses are rarely mixed beyond the central sector. Generally speaking, these conditions somewhat favour the automobile. However, the beginning of an increase in city density through the development of priority sectors and vacant lots in urban areas, as well as efforts to reclassify the downtown area and city cores have been noted.

In 2009, our city and the Société de transports de Sherbrooke (STS) launched a sustainable mobility centre (Centre de sustainable mobility de Sherbrooke or CMDS), which is creating a sustainable mobility plan. Its objective is to foster the development of active transportation and public transit.

ORIENTATIONS

TRANSPORTATION SERVICES:

- Facilitate walking and bicycling within the urban area boundary (sidewalks, crosswalks, etc.).
- Develop the current active transportation network to better accommodate home-to-work travel.
- Pursue the development of intermodal transportation involving active transportation and public transit, carpooling and car-sharing.
- Adapt the public transit services offered and related infrastructure to the needs of client groups.
- Make public transit more competitive when compared to travel by car in terms of direct costs and travel time.
- Facilitate intermodal transportation involving urban and interurban public transit.
- Pursue the development of a public, institutional and private partnership for carpooling and car-sharing on a greater scale.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING:

- Rethink roadway sharing to encourage transportation methods other than the automobile on its own, and improve the quality of public spaces.
- Secure the use of the road network for alternative means of transportation.
- Review parking management methods.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT:

- Bring dwelling places closer to workplaces and commercial districts.
- Reclassify the central zone and city cores by encouraging mixing and increased density.
- Enhance mixing in existing and planned neighbourhoods.
- Incorporate sustainable mobility actions in planning the entire urbanized area.

OPTIMIZE OCCUPANCY OF THE URBANIZED SECTOR

Accommodating development beyond the urban area boundary has a cost: extension of infrastructure networks, possible expansion of treatment facilities, cost of public transit service, construction of schools, addition of green spaces and recreational facilities, etc. It is thus, a priori, preferable to concentrate urban development, primarily residential development, in sectors that already have services. Thus, our city must have sufficient space and be able to offer housing that meets the demand. From this perspective, Sherbrooke is in a favourable situation given its anticipated demographic growth, the state of its urban fabric, and the evolution of its industrial and commercial structure.

In fact, the Sherbrooke population will continue to grow in the coming years, going from 154 800 residents in 2011 to about 164 000 in 2026, an increase of 5.4%. Nonetheless, the rhythm of growth will be less than half what it has been in the past: declining from 1% per year from 1996 to 2010 to 0.4% per year from 2011 to 2026.

The population will also age: the 65 and over age category makes up 16% of the total population in 2011 and it will comprise 25% in 2026. The number of households will increase: roughly 70 300 in 2011 and projected to be 78 750 in 2026, an increase of 12%. In contrast, household size will decline slightly, from an average of 2.2 people per household in 2011 to 2.1 in 2026.

In terms of these trends, Sherbrooke has sufficient space to meet the needs of the next 15 years and beyond. The following development projections are for the period 2011-2026: residential demand will increase from 14 500 to 17 200 dwellings and the surface area required will increase from 560 to 670 hectares.

The challenge in certain central sectors will be to achieve a density of about 40 dwellings per hectare to ensure the adequate provision of public services.

ORIENTATIONS

URBANIZATION:

- Increase the density of the area within an urban area boundary adjusted to new land use realities.
- Reclassify old sectors, a number of which are occupied by industrial or commercial buildings.
- Continue revitalizing the downtown sector and city cores, in particular by promoting residential development.

HOUSING:

- Favour residential development concepts that increase the area's housing density.
- Encourage diversification in the types of dwellings.
- Favour a social mix.
- Promote the development of housing concepts and products that are well adapted to the evolution of Sherbrooke's client groups.

ENHANCE THE VALUE ATTRIBUTED TO RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL AREAS

Sherbrooke's urban area is basically separated from its agricultural zone by a rural area with very diverse occupancy. Within the rural sector are homes, resorts, businesses, industries, forests, sand and gravel pits, horse stables, golf courses, and outdoor recreational areas. The co-existence of diverse uses can be a source of conflict. Bucolic landscapes are threatened. Sporadic and scattered urbanization is putting pressure on the rural area.

This vast rural territory, comprising 34% of Sherbrooke's surface area, must be managed based on its own assets. Its vocation is certainly not to be a reserve for urbanization; it is not only buffer zone between urbanized and agricultural areas. This territory must not be regarded as being on the sidelines awaiting the extension of the urban area boundary. It plays a key role in the protection of biodiversity, natural landscapes, and forest environments in particular. It is also suitable for certain types of small-scale agriculture, and for a broader variety of recreational and tourist activities and those requiring expanses of space in close proximity to the urban environment. Thus, specific orientations must be established for this sector, following an analysis of its environmental and economic potential.

The permanent agricultural zone, covering 13 462 hectares, comprises almost 37% of Sherbrooke's territory. Agricultural operations occupy 43% of this zone. Strictly speaking, the cultivated surface area, excluding pastures and sugar bushes, comprises only 23% of the permanent agricultural zone. In 2007, there were 60 agricultural operations focused primarily on dairy production, beef cattle, and horticulture.

Protection of the permanent agricultural zone is ensured through prescribed legislation, the *Act respecting the Preservation of agricultural land and agricultural activities*, which has proven to be effective. If agricultural activity wishes to survive, it must be able to adapt to various economic, environmental, and social challenges, by:

- providing competitive responses to consumer demand by adjusting production accordingly;
- profitable production within the context of climate change and while respecting the environment by adopting new approaches;
- ensuring a new generation to manage and develop the operations.

ORIENTATIONS

RURAL AREA:

- Maintain strict control over urban development within the rural area.
- Identify and protect natural landscapes and environments of interest.
- Direct the potential for economic development in the rural area.

AGRICULTURAL AREA:

- Ensure the protection, enhancement, and long-term survival of the area and its agricultural activities.
- Develop a development plan for its agricultural zones with the following objectives:
 - encourage dynamic occupation of the agricultural zone focused on agriculture;
 - enhance agricultural potential from the perspective of expanding and diversifying agricultural activities;
 - promote the development of activities that complement agriculture such as agritourism;
 - play a role in the harmonious co-existence of agricultural and non- agricultural uses;
 - encourage greater multifunctionality of the area in devitalized areas.

CONSOLIDATE THE ECONOMIC BASE AND DEVELOP THE KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY

Sherbrooke's role as the regional capital results in a significant number of public service jobs (nearly 30% of all jobs). This guarantees a permanent, stable core of jobs with some prospects for growth. These jobs are relatively well paid. The government services sector contributes to the importance of the tertiary sector, as do production and consumer services. Consumer services benefit from Sherbrooke's regional outreach; the commercial surface area and particularly that of big box stores clearly demonstrates this. Proper urban planning allows this development to be controlled without restricting its potential. In addition, the creation of Commerce Sherbrooke supports and contributes to commercial development.

The growth in tertiary services mainly comes from a growth in demand, which itself is linked to a rise in productivity in the secondary sector, specifically the traditional and modern manufacturing sector. Enrichment of the population is thus directly related to business productivity, i.e. the production value of one hour of work. In the Quebec context, Sherbrooke should attain better performance in terms of productivity.

Sherbrooke has a number of assets that contribute to its success: proximity to U.S. markets, a diversified labour force especially qualified in several fields of higher learning with the Sherbrooke University Pole, low set-up and operating costs, modern and varied real estate in terms of industrial space, and an economic development support structure with Sherbrooke Innopole.

The development of the Sherbrooke University Pole is especially a determining development factor for Sherbrooke. With its eight institutions, 11 000 jobs, including 3700 professors, teachers, and researchers, and 40 000 students, the Pole provides Sherbrooke with a unique opportunity to develop in the knowledge economy, based on the quality of its human capital and its potential for innovation. A significant proportion of students come from outside the Estrie region, and even from other countries, and live in Sherbrooke during their studies. The availability of both French- and English-language instruction by these institutions is also an asset for Sherbrooke. The Pole annually generates \$1 billion in expenses. It increases the chances of encouraging young graduates to stay here and also allows for the expansion of community infrastructure.

Sherbrooke is served by a railway network; access to the North American network is an underexploited potential given the condition of the lines. This issue should be studied, assessing its potential for transporting merchandise and people, and determining action to be taken regarding routes, lines, equipment, development of partnerships, and marketing.

Sherbrooke also offers air transport. The Sherbrooke airport enjoys regional significance and it is an asset contributing to the region's economic development.

ORIENTATIONS

- Support Sherbrooke Innopole in:
 - improving productivity and innovation in companies;
 - encouraging high productivity industries (life sciences, clean technologies, micro-nanotechnologies, information technologies and communications, advanced manufacturing);
 - developing an entrepreneurial culture to ensure a new generation of entrepreneurs and create new businesses;
 - creating and launching innovative businesses;
 - diversifying the manufacturing base.
- Support the development of the Sherbrooke University Pole and its institutions to promote a convergence of the education, research and development, incubation, production, and marketing sectors.
- Promote the industrial parks.
- Support Commerce Sherbrooke in:
 - creating a strategic vision for commercial development;
 - developing a dynamic, consistent, and balanced commercial structure throughout the territory;
 - pursuing efforts to redevelop the downtown sector as well as developing an action plan to revitalize certain commercial arteries and zones.
- Play a leadership role in regional discussions on the redevelopment of the railway network for the transportation of both merchandise and people.
- Promote the economic and industrial development of Sherbrooke's airport.

POSITION SHERBROOKE AS A DESTINATION FOR URBAN TOURISM

The tourist trade in Sherbrooke results in significant local benefits: \$1.7 million in overnight stays per year, about 3000 direct and indirect jobs, and \$160 million in revenue. This performance is related to the attraction of a diversified tourist offer, new tourist attractions, marketing that effectively targets Quebec clientele, and an increase in hotel capacity. Conferences and events, 80% of which are sports-related, are important contributors to the tourist customer base. Numbering roughly 100 per year, they host some 65 000 people who directly spend \$6 million onsite. Recent investments in sports infrastructure, among other investments, will help ensure the longevity of Sherbrooke's tourism industry.

There is potential to increase Sherbrooke's tourist trade through conferences and events, but also through individual or group city touring, combining nature and culture. To do so, our city's heritage must be showcased and the cultural offer further developed through existing facilities and organizations. Enhancing this offer will benefit first and foremost Sherbrooke residents who will have access to new recreational opportunities and an enhanced living environment. The creation of Destination Sherbrooke will ensure sustainable recreational tourism development for our city.

ORIENTATIONS

- Support Destination Sherbrooke in the implementation of a strategic plan to develop the tourist offer, in particular by:
 - improving the built environment of attractive sectors (for both residents and visitors) and developing the tourist offer around the three core areas, connected by a tour, through quality layouts, design, and activities. These three core areas are:
 - the downtown sector and the old North Ward (urban cultural experiences);
 - the Lac des Nations and Magog River sector (nature in the city and active experiences);
 - the Borough of Lennoxville (heritage and learning experiences).
 - developing conference and exhibition tourism, in particular that related to Sherbrooke's university qualities;
 - maintaining an attractive offer for sports events and promoting our city in this regard;

- developing gourmet tourism;
 - developing the cultural offer;
 - developing large-scale events;
 - developing sustainable, recreational tourism attractions;
 - developing and implementing the master development plan for the St. Francis River to highlight and develop this blue corridor.
- Enhance natural spaces in a natural network of parks to create a green belt, thus contributing to Sherbrooke's objective of conserving 12% of its surface area as natural environments.

ENCOURAGE CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY LIFE

Citizens play a key role in Sherbrooke's strategic vision for development, and to implement these strategies, it is vital to encourage citizen participation. Thus, our city wishes to enable citizens and organizations to express their opinions on policies, by-laws, projects, and actions that are likely to have a direct or indirect impact on their living environments. In 2009, Sherbrooke adopted a consultation policy. Focusing on transparency, information, participation, and listening, this policy's objectives are to include a citizen consultation process in our city's deliberations and decision-making processes, identify the topics on which Sherbrooke plans to consult its citizens, and determine the various means and methods for consultation.

Consultation and joint action are thus meant to be common practices by our city, and these approaches must be perfected on an ongoing basis. This will result in a better grasp of community needs and more effectively meeting these needs. It will also enhance the sense of belonging and lead to a greater sense of citizen responsibility and greater involvement.

Sherbrooke boasts a well-developed voluntary sector: it has close to 400 community, cultural, sports, and recreational organizations. The city has an eligibility policy for these organizations and a partnership statement, revised in 2009. This opens the way for the signing of agreements with new major partners from the public, parapublic, and private sectors for the purpose of carrying out development projects related to Sherbrooke's sectoral orientations and activities.

Our city has also adopted policies, such as its social and community development policy, and action plans in such areas as welcoming and integrating immigrants, integrating people with disabilities, and enhancing the quality of life of seniors.

ORIENTATIONS

- Promote citizen participation.
- Encourage interaction among borough residents and their participation in the life of their neighbourhood.
- Maintain partnerships with community, cultural, sports and recreational organizations.
- Encourage healthy lifestyles and promote environmentally-responsible behaviour.
- Continue welcoming and integrating immigrants.
- Enhance the social integration of people with disabilities.
- Adapt structures and services for seniors.
- Promote solidarity and social inclusion.